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Up the down staircase: establishing library instruction programs for teachers.

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Library-literate teachers, working cooperatively with school library personnel, could ensure successful instructional programs for pupils. Articles and documents relevant to continuing efforts to promote library instruction in teacher education programs are examined here to assess attitudes toward instruction, program goals, and appropriate methodologies for teaching teachers.

Educators generally acknowledge that elementary and secondary school teachers profoundly influence pupils' attitudes toward learning and use of educational resources such as libraries. Librarians believe that library instruction programs that foster good information-seeking skins and promote positive attitudes toward library use are important for all students. These programs are particularly needed by those who will influence future generations of students: the teacher trainees.

This article reviews selected writings relevant to the continuing struggle to establish library instruction programs for future teachers. Materials from the early part of this century are considered because they define issues and place them in historical perspective. These concerns are explored further in current studies that provide a more analytical perspective on attitudes and program goals. Finally, several publications that describe programs and materials are reviewed to clarify the options available to those who wish to establish or strengthen library instruction programs for teachers.

HOW FAR UP THE STAIRCASE

HAVE WE PROGRESSED?

Educators and librarians recognized the need for teaching library skills to future teachers at the end of the last century. One of the earliest reports of interest in library instruction for teacher education students was provided by Emma Adams in 1898 who surveyed twenty "foremost" normal schools and found that only one reported providing no instruction in the use of reference books. The remainder offered some sort of instruction, ranging from informal, individual instruction to classroom talks by librarians and library bibliography assignments..sup.1

A larger survey by Evans, published in 1914, assessed the state of library instruction in colleges and universities and in normal schools. Of the 284 normal schools in existence, 166 replied to his inquiry, and 93 of these, one-third of the total population, reported instruction in library methods and bibliography and in children's literature. The course descriptions provided by Evans revealed a range of offerings, from vaguely defined "brief" courses to well-structured programs at some schools. Wisconsin and Idaho were the only states requiring library instruction in normal schools at that time .sup.2

At about the same time, the national professional associations of educators and of librarians individually and jointly called for action on standards for library education in teachers colleges..sup.3 Early reports of library work in normal schools in the National Education Association's Addresses and Proceedings expressed a growing recognition of the need for mandatory instruction..sup.4

The 1904 NEA report described required library methods courses at state normal schools in Whitewater, Wisconsin, and Emporia, Kansas. The president of the state normal school in Kansas, jasper Wilkinson, acknowledged the influence of teachers on their pupils' use of libraries when he stated that "the making of library knowledge and enthusiasm general among normal-school students is a most effective means of making district-school libraries successful. "'In the 1915 NEA report on library training in normal schools, Carroll G. Pearse, president of the state normal school at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, echoed the call for explicit instruction in library use:

The use of the science laboratories and their equipments. . .is carefully explained and demonstrated. . . but how many schools are there which, as a regular Part of their work, firpaint a revealing picture of the challenges facing those working toward improvement of teachers' library skills. More than twenty years ago, Perkins tested the library skills of 4,000 college seniors in education programs and found many to be deficient in basic finding skills such as identifying titles or subject terms in Readers' Guide citations. Perkins also cited an NEA survey indicating that only 13 percent of teachers at that time had received library instruction as part of their professional training..sup.10 Not much had changed since Evans studied the prevalence of instruction in colleges and normal schools in 1914. In fact, fewer teachers were receiving instruction in library use fifty years later.

In 1970, Saddler reported a study of information presented about libraries in Kentucky teacher-training programs to assess the attitudes conveyed by instructional materials and the accuracy of information presented. She found that while almost three-fourths of the institutions responding had formal library instruction programs for education graduate students, only one-fourth taught a unit on the library as part of the undergraduate education curriculum. Of the textbooks for introductory education classes examined, the majority offered little information on the library as an educational resource. The prevailing image of the library presented "not a dynamic service organization. . .but a shabby, insignificant 'Place' where teachers might find some supplementary books.

More recent studies have indicated that teachers and college faculty recognize the need for instruction and their own deficiencies in the area of information-finding skills. LeClerq surveyed more than three hundred high school teachers in the Knoxville, Tennessee, area. In response to questions on teachers' use of library resources, only 28 percent indicated that they gave assignments requiring library use, but more than 50 percent said that they would give more research assignments if pupils had access to college library collections. A surprisingly large number of teachers reported that they provided information skills instruction. However, when 51 percent of high school mathematics teachers indicate that they teach "information use skills," one must wonder how those respondents perceived that phrase. Not surprisingly, though, nearly two thirds of all teachers other than those who teach English said that they felt unprepared to teach information skills..sup.12

O'Hanlon surveyed faculty in Ohio elementary teacher-training programs to assess attitudes toward library instruction in the teacher-training curriculum and toward the role of the elementary school teacher in library skill development of pupils. Respondents clearly supported library instruction for teacher trainees. In fact, two-thirds indicated that the first priority of the

teacher-training program should be teaching lifelong or independent learning skills. However, the majority saw the chief benefit of library instruction as improving the ability of the teacher to solve job-related, classroom management problems rather than enhancing the teachers' ability to foster information skills in pupils. Respondents also indicated that elementary school teachers should play an important role in fostering information skills in pupils, yet almost half stated that current graduates of their teacher-training programs were inadequately prepared to assume this role. Finally, faculty need to be convinced of the synergistic relationship between developing research/information skills and improving critical thinking abilities. Skills associated with critical-thinking abilities such as research question analysis or planning and evaluation skills were viewed by respondents as less important than traditional finding/source related library use skills..sup.13

Hall, reporting on an international study for UNESCO, analyzed the relationship between teachers' information competencies and their use of school libraries and identified areas of concern for teacher educators. She cited a recent Britishst instruct and then train their students in the use of this, potentially, the most valuable of all laboratories-the mental laboratory of the school?.sup.6

The 1915 proceedings also presented the report of the joint NEA/ALA Committee on Standardizing the Course of Study in Normal Schools. The NEA conducted a survey of 100 school supervisors to determine what knowledge a teacher should have about libraries. After analyzing results, the committee recommended standard required courses in the use of the library for all normal school students along with a lengthier course in directing children's reading and an optional course in library organization and administration to prepare teacher librarians..sup.7

Mabel Harris, writing in 1934, summarized these and other early reports to ascertain the status of library instruction for teachers at that time using the catalogs of 114 accredited state teachers colleges as her source. She also presented a sample curriculum for a model program. An introductory bibliography course focused on learning about reference sources was recommended along with a children's literature course. Harris also proposed that teacher education students complete an advanced bibliography course to provide practice in research techniques..sup.8

A number of other writers during the ensuing decades provided variations on this basic theme, re-emphasizing the need for teacher training in library use. Instruction programs were shown to offer real benefits to teachers and their pupils. Ethel Garber, a public librarian, presented anecdotal evidence to demonstrate that the teacher's lack of library skills leads to construction of inappropriate and frustrating assignments for pupils. She stated that "It is not unusual for us to have reference questions, coming from junior high school pupils, that would tax the reference genius of the average graduate student.".sup.9

Similar complaints about teachers' library illiteracy are still heard today. Requests for a national standard for library education of teacher trainees continue to be voiced by the library profession, but these calls are largely ignored by those who plan teacher training curriculums or set state standards for teacher certification. Perhaps the case, which demonstrates the varied and practical benefits that accrue when teachers learn and transmit information-seeking skills, has not been presented in a convincing manner. Or perhaps the dry, reference tool-oriented instruction usually proposed has been viewed by teacher educators as not really effective or beneficial. Although children's literature courses are now common fare for student teachers at the elementary level, instruction in information-seeking skills in teacher training institutions is still only haphazardly provided. The following examination of more recent writings and reports presents evidence relevant to these concerns. These articles describe attitudes of teachers and

teacher education faculty toward library instruction and ideas for programs that offer opportunities for genuine growth.

WHAT DO TEACHERS NEED TO KNOW?

Survey studies indicate that both education faculty and school teachers value proficiency in finding and using information. A number of reports, however, attest to the fact that most teachers do not have appropriate skills for successfully manipulating library resources. Surveys measuring library skills or attitudes toward library instruction in teacher training programs study indicating that "teachers are low in information consciousness, but high in problem consciousness, that they say they see the importance of keeping up-to-date but feel they lack the skills to identify, access and use information..sup.14 Again, the role of information skills instruction in helping teachers maintain professional skills and solve job-related problems is reiterated, but the role of information skills instruction in supporting development of critical-thinking skills is not acknowledged. The need for instruction is recognized, but a consensus on the goals of instruction for teachers has not been reached.

Mancall presents a rationale for a broad-based, process-oriented information skills curriculum for elementary pupils that goes beyond "locational skills and 'correct answers' . . . . to strategies that will help students to develop insight and facility in structuring successful approaches to solving their information needs.".sup.15 Mancall reviewed research on how students best develop critical-thinking skills and ideas about the role of metacognition, or "thinking about thinking," in this process that are equally applicable to the development of college-level information skills programs for teachers.

Several other articles offer models for library instruction that reinforce the development of critical-thinking skills. Mellon described a generic, process-oriented model for library instruction developed at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, that parallels stages in the writing process and promotes recurring analysis and evaluation of the research underway. Mellon asserts that writing and doing research to support writing progress in a cyclical rather than a linear fashion. Analysis of the research question generates a "need to know." When this need is satisfied through appropriate research activities, writing can proceed, followed by additional analysis of the written product and usually additional research, synthesis, and evaluation. Eventually a finished work is produced. "

The process described by Mellon closely resembles the problem-solving process that Oberman illuminated. Oberman concluded that the library research process contains all the elements of problem solving. By using a practical instructional model such as guided design as a vehicle for instruction, the student is provided with opportunities to practice and strengthen critical or analytical skills, information-finding or research abilities, and group problem-solving skills. As students work together to tackle practical problems, each staRe of the problem solving process requires that information be sought, sifted, evaluated, and applied to an aspect of the project..sup.17

O'Hanlon explored the relationship between library research skills, critical thinking abilities, and problem-solving skills and proposed guided design as an ideal methodology for strengthening these abilities in future teachers. She also described the potential benefits for teachers and for pupils that might result from a strong program of research/critical skills

instruction for teacher trainees. Chief among these benefits is the heightened ability of teachers

to foster critical, evaluative skills in their pupils."

HOW ARE TEACHERS BEST TAUGHT?

Previous sections of this paper examined needs expressed by teachers and faculty as well as appropriate models for providing research or information skills instruction to teachers. The following review of published descriptions of instructional materials and programs for library instruction for teacher trainees offers some insight into methodologies for providing instruction effectively.

A self-paced workbook used in a program at King Is College in Pennsylvania" and an instructional module developed at SUNY-Potsdam.sup.20 both focus on detailed descriptions of the features of important reference sources. The workbook presents a menu of sources along with multiple choice assignments. No practice in choosing appropriate sources is provided for the student, nor does the author fit the types of reference materials described into any kind of cognitive map of the information world so that students can at least learn when particular kinds of sources are likely to satisfy the need for specific types of information.

The SUNY module does attempt to provide this type of framework for the user and stresses the importance of question analysis in constructing an appropriate search strategy. However, the test designed to accompany the module does not provide any practice in selecting appropriate sources based on topic analysis, but rather directs the student to named sources to be used in the exercise. Practical or logistical problems at a particular institution can certainly affect the feasibility of presenting students with open ended questions in library instruction exercises. However, one must question the utility of focusing narrowly upon features of tools if the goal is to teach broader, conceptual skills and library research as a process.

Sheppard, a professor of education at Idaho State University, described the attention paid to library skills for teachers at that institution. Students applying for admission to the teacher-education program must demonstrate adequate library skills by passing a standardized test. Those who fail the test can either complete a programmed workbook or enroll in an introductory library skills course for credit." While the course is not described, the information presented about the workbook intimates that it is source- rather than process-oriented. Sheppard did not indicate whether any further library skills instruction beyond the basics is provided for teacher trainees. His notion of appropriate library instruction as tool-oriented and easily acquired through one brief instructional effort parallels the views of Ohio education faculty respondents expressed in the O'Hanlon study.

In contrast to this approach, Tierno and Lee described the instructional program for education students at Lake Forest College in Illinois..sup.22 This course-integrated program builds skills in a structured sequence and provides multiple opportunities for practice. Education faculty and librarians cooperatively designed lessons that incorporate both theory of library search strategy development and learning about the use of specific tools needed to accomplish assignments. The program centers around four writing projects offered in several required courses. Students are asked to define an educational concept succinctly in a short essay, prepare an annotated bibliography, write a short position paper, and, finally, produce a longer research paper. For the final project, students incorporate relevant materials obtained from a computerized literature search.

Not only does this program provide for reinforcement of task-oriented skills, since search skills and reference sources are used several times in different contexts, but development of

critical skills is facilitated by the requirement that students evaluate final research products in groups. Library instruction in each segment is provided by the course instructor, but final projects are evaluated by both librarians and instructors to determine whether goals have been achieved. Preliminary evaluation of the program indicated that not enough students learned to design their own search strategies since these were provided for them, but that information-finding skills did improve.

CONCLUSIONS

Successful educational programs are experiential, providing multiple opportunities for the student to practice skills and to get feedback from instructors and others. While educators involved in training teachers recognize the validity of this assertion in relation to helping students acquire a wide variety of skills, they seem unwilling to acknowledge the need for library instruction programs that also provide repeated opportunities for practice and for evaluation of results.

Librarians have attempted to convince educators of the value of bibliographic instruction for teacher trainees for more than eighty years, without much success. The kinds of instruction traditionally proposed do not appear to be attractive enough to lure curriculum planners into making room for library instruction. Designing programs for teaching library and information skills that clearly support the development of critical, analytical skills should create a strong incentive for faculty to take a second look. Certainly, as some colleges reconfigure education programs along radically different lines, such as the Holmes group proposal,sup.23 library instruction programs must evolve to augment the teacher training unit's goals.

Alternatively, librarians must consider other approaches to faculty. If appeals to lofty pedagogical ideals have no impact, demonstrations of cost effectiveness and practical benefits to teachers and their pupils should be more convincing.

Negative images of the school library present another barrier. Academic librarians must join forces and work together with members of organizations such as the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) and the NEA to improve the image and effectiveness of the school library and its educational programs and to lobby for enhanced library instruction programs for teachers in training. The recent decision by the American Library Association to seek joint participation with AASL in the accreditation of school media specialist training programs by thc National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) certainly presents an appropriate model of the type of concerted political action needed." Academic librarians must now become more actively involved in certification issues affecting teacher preparation programs. Then perhaps the combined efforts of academic and school librarians and concerned teachers will move library literacy programs for teacher trainees to the top of the staircase, convincing faculty that information skills instruction is a vital and necessary part of the teacher-education curriculum.

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